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FOSTERING COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

FOMENTO DE LAS COMPETENCIAS COMUNICATIVAS EN LA ENSEÑANZA EN EMPRENDIMIENTO

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ABSTRACT

The learning process at the university demands more and more active participation from students and a greater approximation to the reality that is the object of learning. In the case of creation of companies and entrepreneurship courses, it is common for teaching to be actively organized around the development of a business plan (project-based learning) developed in a group (cooperative learning). However, in many cases, the communication dimension of the business plan, an essential task in any process of setting up a business, is not worked or it is limited to the presentation of the project to be evaluated by lecturers. In this context, this paper presents two internationalization actions developed in entrepreneurship courses with the objective of teaching how to communicate a business project, all of them with an international scope. Furthermore, the initiative objectives include the improvement of students' communication skills and competences, increase their participation in learning and evaluation processes, and facilitate them a multicultural vision of

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entrepreneurship provided by lecturers from other universities. The results have shown a greater involvement of the students, not only in the task of communicating their business project, but also in the interest, attention and feedback provided to the business plans of their peers, thus increasing learning through this cooperation. In addition, the participation of international lecturers has been an incentive to students to improve their communication actions.

KEYWORDS
active learning, communication, cooperative learning, entrepreneurship, internationalization

RESUMEN

El proceso de aprendizaje en la universidad demanda cada vez más la participación activa de los estudiantes y una mayor aproximación a la realidad objeto de aprendizaje. En el caso de las asignaturas de creación de empresas y emprendimiento, es común que el aprendizaje se organice de forma activa alrededor del desarrollo de un plan de negocio (aprendizaje basado en proyectos) desarrollado en un grupo de trabajo (aprendizaje cooperativo). Sin embargo, en muchos casos, la dimensión comunicativa del plan de negocio, tarea esencial en el proceso de creación de un negocio, no se trabaja lo suficiente o se limita a una presentación evaluada por los profesores. En este contexto, este artículo presenta dos acciones de internacionalización desarrolladas en asignaturas de emprendimiento con el objetivo de enseñar cómo comunicar un proyecto de negocio, todo ello en un contexto internacional. Además, los objetivos incluyen la mejora de las habilidades y competencias de comunicación de los estudiantes, aumentar su participación en el aprendizaje y los procesos de evaluación, y facilitarles una visión multicultural del emprendimiento, proporcionada por profesores de otras universidades. Los resultados han mostrado una mayor participación de los estudiantes, no solo en la tarea de comunicar su proyecto empresarial, sino también en el interés, atención y feedback proporcionado a los proyectos de sus compañeros, incrementando así el aprendizaje a través de la cooperación. Además, la participación de profesores internacionales ha sido un incentivo para los estudiantes a la hora de mejorar sus acciones de comunicación.

PALABRAS CLAVE
aprendizaje activo, comunicación, aprendizaje cooperativo, emprendimiento, internacionalización

INTRODUCTION

The use of active learning methodologies has made it possible to carry out numerous improvements and innovations at university teaching in recent years, and thus increasingly comply with the postulates of the European Higher Education Area, which promotes a more protagonist role for students in learning.

The use of methodologies such as cooperative learning (Goikoetxea & Pascual, 2002; Pérez-García, 2017), project-based learning (De Miguel et al, 2005), the case method (Gómez et al, 2022), or the flipped classroom (Prieto et

al, 2021), among others, have been shown in numerous cases to increase student interest, commitment, content learning and the development of skills and competences (Casanovas et al, 2021; Misseyanni et al, 2018). In addition, students are more responsible for their learning and that of their classmates to achieve group goals and incentives (De Miguel, 2006).

These methodologies make it easier for students to better understand the content and better consolidate their assimilation (Roberts, 2019). Furthermore, they lead to improvements in students' thinking and writing (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). Compared to the traditional passive role in which students listen to lecturers and read the provided materials, today students create content, participate in the development of lectures, solve problems, develop projects, and interact with their classmates and lecturers.

The combination or even the substitution of the lecture for this type of active methodologies has changed in recent years to a great extent the way lecturers teach and students learn at universities. At present, on the one hand, lecturers tend to have a leading role in the design of contents, materials, tasks, and activities. On the other hand, students then have a leading role in the development of classes and activities, and the lecturer becomes an observer and a guide of the student during the learning process (Imbernon, 2005). Within the field of business administration, this type of teaching allows the student to learn through practice and from the reality of companies and markets, while greatly enhancing the development of key skills and competences fundamental for the future professional practice.

One of the courses in which it makes sense to replace traditional methodologies with other active learning techniques is entrepreneurship and creation of companies. This is the case of the course “Creation of companies and family business” at the Degree in Business Administration and Management at the University of Cantabria, in Spain. It is an optional course consisting in two modules, one about entrepreneurship, and another one about family business. The same course is offered in two languages, one in Spanish and another one in English. Since teaching strategy in the entrepreneurship module changed a few years ago from lectures to cooperative and a project-based learning, significant improvements were observed in the number of students enrolled and their levels of satisfaction and learning.

However, lecturers have observed that there are still deficiencies in the acquisition of communication skills, and there are room for improvement in cooperation and interaction with other colleagues and their projects. That is why a change focused on how to communicate through the use of new communication techniques and cooperative learning was designed, with the aim of increasing students’ involvement and take advantage of the opportunities offered by having students from several countries. This is the origin for the first internationalization action in which the traditional business project presentation in groups in front of the lecturer is replaced by a communication activity in two stages. Firstly, students, working in groups, have to generate an infographic to present their business project. Secondly, they present their projects at a fair. For the fair, the infographics of their projects are printed by the lecturers on large posters, looking for the benefits that visual narrative provides in terms of connection between theory and practice (Rivo-López et al, 2022). Students set up a stand where they explain their project and show how the purchase or service process would be carried out. As a result of this fair, students receive feedback from lecturers and

their peers, both from discussions during the fair, and also, they have to fill in a questionnaire with the assessment of each project.

Another dimension that enhances the European framework for higher education is the internationalization of universities and learning. European Universities promoted by the European Commission are a good example of this strategy, among which is the European University for Customized Education (EUNICE), where the University of Cantabria is represented. European Universities are transnational alliances that allow more flexibility, more internationalization and less bureaucracy. EUNICE is designed to solve social and economic challenges, both globally and locally. The alliance is nurtured by seven universities' intellectual and infrastructure input, resulting in a solid network of crossed interactions between educational institutions, industry and business partners, as well as other social, cultural, artistic and sports stakeholders (EUNICE, 2022). In the case of the courses that are the object of this study, there has been a growing number of international students, both in the course in Spanish and in the course in English. In this context, it was decided to further increase the international profile of learning through a second internationalization action in which students, through an elevator pitch, present their business projects not only to international students (their peers), but also to international lecturers.

In short, the two innovation actions carried out have made it possible to change the communication of the students’ projects from a simple presentation to the lecturers, to a four-stage communication process in which they receive feedback from national and international students and lecturers.

This paper is structured as follows. After this introduction we present the academic context in which the teaching innovations took place, explaining the context of the course in the Bachelor´s degree, the organization of the course before the introduction of the internationalization actions, the limitations identified and the innovation proposal. Secondly, we describe the most relevant competences that are addressed with this project, as well as the expected learning outcomes. We then describe the methodology, indicating the teaching methodologies, the role of lecturers and students, and explaining the design of the actions and the communication of the same. Results section describes the implementation of the actions, the learning outcomes in relation to the competences for each of the actions, as well as feedback actions and their importance in the gradual development of the acquisition of competences. Finally, we comment on the conclusions after the changes introduced in the course and discuss about lessons learned both for this course and for future innovations.

PREVIOUS SITUATION CONTEXT

The first step of the research follows the methodology applied by Gómez et al (2022), in which they conduct an analysis of the situation of the teaching-learning process based in the experience accumulated by lecturers in the course under study. This section contextualizes the course in the degree and explains the objectives and academic aspects. Then we describe the course structure, teaching methodologies and evaluation system of the entrepreneurship module before the project, as well as the roles of lecturers and students. Furthermore, we explain more in detail how the communication and evaluation of the business plans developed by students was organized. The results of this previous analysis

allowed us to find limitations of the current teaching organization, modalities and methodologies, as well as the identification of potential improvements.

The course "Creation of companies and family business" is taught in English at the University of Cantabria in the third year of the Bachelor's Degrees in Business Administration and Management (GADE, in Spanish), and the Degree in Economics (GE, in Spanish), and in the fifth year of the Double Degree in Administration and Business Management and Economics. The course is also offered in Spanish at the same degrees and academic courses. It is an optional course with a load of 6 ECTS credits and is taught in the second semester for 98 students during 2021-2022 in a face to face manner, 51 in the course taught in English, and 47 in the course taught in Spanish. In both groups, there are Spanish and international students. The responsibility, planning and teaching is developed at the Business Organization Area of the Department of Business Administration of the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration. It is one of the courses within the course "Further General Management" and of the “Intensification in Business” Module.

The course is divided into two modules, business creation and family business, and each of them is assigned 50% of class hours, content and evaluation. The entrepreneurship module aims to systematize the way to collect the information needed to assess the weaknesses and potential of a business idea through the development of a business plan. Currently, the course is eminently practical so that students, as they study all the theoretical steps in the viability analysis, they assess the viability of their ideas. It consists of four units and it is taught in seven weeks of class (with two two-hour sessions per week). From now on, only the entrepreneurship module will be discussed.

Student's autonomous learning is encouraged through methods based on project-based learning. Moreover, group work is proposed as a method of cooperative learning. Currently, learning is developed around a project in which groups of five or six students prepare a business plan, from the definition of the business idea, to the financial structure, passing through the economic, commercial and technical viabilities.

Throughout the semester, students develop, submit and present each of the viabilities, and receive feedback from lecturers, in such a way that a continuous improvement process is experienced until the final report is submitted. It is also used a system in which, in each class, the lecturer begins with a brief lecture to expose and explain the contents, and the rest of the class, students work in groups through different dynamics and individual and group activities, always applied to their business plans. After having submitted three drafts of their business plan, at the end of the term each group submit the final version of the project, and defend the business plan in front of the lecturers during 15 minutes.

The calendar with the planning for the entire semester is available from the first day. This calendar indicates for each session the contents to be developed and the activities to be carried out, as well as the deadlines. The audiovisual presentations used as support in these classes, with the main contents of each topic, are accessible to the student in the virtual platform Moodle. In addition, students have access to a basic and complementary bibliography, and recommendations for further reading.

Regarding evaluation, the entrepreneurship module represents 50% of the final grade of the course. It is a continuous evaluation system that considers the student's performance from the first day. The different activities carried out by the

student in class represent 5% of the final grade for the course. The business plan, as well as its presentation, scores 35% of the grade. The evaluation of this module is completed with a multiple-choice test exam at the end of the semester that represents 10% of the final grade. The objective of this last individual test is to identify and consider in the evaluation potential cases of opportunism in which there are students whose group grade does not reflect the real performance and learning of the student.

The development of a business project based on an idea that the students themselves have chosen, as well as the responsibility assigned to them in preparing the business plan, has increased their interest and commitment to the course. The fact that in each of the classes they are provided with new information necessary for their project, and they are given time to work together in the classroom, has increased the usefulness of classes and has significantly increased attendance. Another positive impact observed is the benefits derived from collective and cooperative work, where students value positively and perceive the benefits of interaction with classmates, not only in terms of knowledge acquired, but also in terms of social skills, communication and improvement of the work environment. The positive impact of this organization is also translated into an increase in students´ satisfaction and in a sustained increase in the number of students enrolled.

The improvements achieved over these years have at the same time allowed us to identify new areas for improvement. One of the aspects of the learning process in which the least progress has been made is the communication of their business plans. While a better performance is seen in informal communication with their peers, the presentation of the project in a formal way has not experienced improvements. Given the importance of the communication stage of the business plan in the business creation process, as in any project management (Wilson, 2022) we decided to address new improvements for teaching this part of the course.

The main objective of the two internationalization actions designed is to improve the knowledge and competences about the communication of business projects through the increase of interactions between national and international students and lecturers in the learning process. The first of the internationalization actions aims to increase cooperation in the learning process through an entrepreneurship fair in which students communicate their projects, but also share ideas and advise the projects of their peers in a multicultural context. The second of the actions aims to involve international lecturers in the process of evaluating and advising business projects. For this second action we have had the collaboration of three professors from Sheffield Hallam University and Montpellier Business School.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

The project aims to improve mainly skills and abilities related to interpersonal relationships and communication, although other skills are worked on throughout the project, such as subject-specific skills and professional attitudes and values (self-learning, collaborative work, leadership, creativity).

There are different approaches for the classification of competences in the field of higher education. Most of these proposals differentiate between generic

competences and specific competences. In this work, we follow the structure of competences of the Tuning project (González and Wagenaar, 2005) as a basic reference for the analysis of generic competences, in combination with the “White paper for the degree in economics and business” of the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation of Spain (Ariza, 2005). Regarding the specific competences, we consider those included in the Teaching Guide of the course in "Creation of companies and family business" of the Bachelor's Degrees in Business Administration and Management of the University of Cantabria. And there are no specific competences related with communication skills.

Tuning distinguishes three types of generic competences. First, instrumental competences: cognitive abilities, methodological abilities, technological abilities and linguistic abilities. Second, interpersonal competences: individual abilities like social skills (social interaction and co-operation). Third, systemic competences: abilities and skills concerning whole systems (combination of understanding, sensibility and knowledge; prior acquisition of instrumental and interpersonal competences required) (González and Wagenaar 2005). Taking this classification into account, in this paper we differentiate between the different generic skills that will help students to improve their communication skills for ideas, projects, etc., and other generic competences related to professional skills and values also worked during the actions. On the one hand, table 1 shows the generic competences related to communication and the expected learning outcomes addressed during the project. On the other hand, table 2 describes those generic competences related to professional skills that are also addresses during the project in relation to communication actions.

Table 1. Generic competences related to communication and expected learning outcomes during the project.

Communication competences	
Instrumental competences	
• Ability to communicate both orally and through the written word in first language	Capacity to communicate a project or business idea through posters and infographics. Ability to expose, defend and discuss a business idea in an informal context. Ability to expose, defend and discuss a business idea in a formal context.
• Ability to communicate in a second language	Capacity to develop the communication actions above in English.
• Ability to plan and manage time	Ability to design, organize and implement communicative actions in the time assigned or appropriated for different situations or communicative contexts.
• Use of information and communication technologies	Ability to identify and use different methodologies, tools and communication technologies, depending on the communication context.
Interpersonal competences	
• Interpersonal and interaction skills	Work and improvement of aspects such as active listening, assertiveness, or empathy.
• Ability to communicate with non-experts of one’s field	Ability to adapt the message and communication action to people who are not experts in management and in the sector, product or service of their business idea.

Systemic competences	
• Creativity	Ability to be creative, original and innovative in communication actions.

Source: Authors' elaboration based on (González and Wagenaar, 2005)

Table 2. Generic competences related to professional skills and abilities and expected learning outcomes during the project.

Professional skills and abilities	
Instrumental competences	
• Ability to identify, pose and resolve problems	Ability to solve the problem of communicating the same message in three different communicative contexts.
• Ability to apply knowledge in practical situations	Ability to explain your business idea and its different aspects (economic, commercial and financial) to different agents (lecturers, students, general public)
• Ability to make reasoned decisions	Ability to decide and justify the aspects of your business project that should be incorporated and highlighted in communication actions, especially in those with limited space or time
Interpersonal competences	
• Ability to be critical and self-critical	Ability to evaluate and criticize the business proposals of their peers, as well as to understand, accept and take advantage of the criticism that others (lecturers, students and the general public) make of their work.
• Ability to work in a team	Capacity to design and implement communication actions within a group.
• Ability to work in an international context	Ability to develop the communicative work in a multicultural context with students and lecturers from different countries.
• Appreciation of and respect for diversity and multiculturality	Ability to respect and integrate behaviours, ideas and opinions of people from different countries and cultures.
Systemic competences	
• Spirit of enterprise, ability to take initiative	Ability to transmit through communication actions the competitive advantage that their business initiative represents.
• Autonomous learning	Ability to, based on some instructions, organize and develop communication actions for their business idea.

Source: Authors' elaboration based on (González and Wagenaar, 2005)

METHODOLOGY

Teaching methodology

Project-based learning and cooperative learning are already used in the course. But the latter is not fully achieved in business plans communication, since students work within their group, but not intergroup. So, this initiative is intended to enhance learning and communication skills by improving cooperative learning by promoting interactions among groups. In addition, different communication

techniques and modalities are used throughout the different activities, in which students first create an infographic, then present their project at an entrepreneurship fair in a more informal way (explaining their project to all the visitors), and finally in a more formal way to international lecturers, through an elevator pitch at the pitching day.

In these actions, lecturers assumed roles of organization, control and evaluation of learning. In no case did the lecturers have the initiative or the main role in the development of the activities. Lecturers main roles were to design the activities, organize them, explain to the students the organization of the activities and the learning objectives, supervise the development of the activities, provide and organize the feedback and evaluate the learning and performance of the students. In the case of the students, they adopted more active roles in their learning. Their tasks consisted of finding out about the organization and objectives of the tasks, organizing and coordinating within their groups to create infographics, representing their business at the fair and carrying out elevator pitches. In addition, they were also responsible for listening and providing feedback to their peers.

Table 3. International actions design and organization

Action	Activity	Organization
" Hot to communicate your project"	1. Design your business plan infographic	• Lecturers explain students what an infographic is, how can be used to communicate a business plan, show examples and indicate different tools and techniques to create the design. • Lecturers indicate the objectives of the activity and provide students with instructions to design an infographic. This is done in class and in a document available in Moodle. • The result has to be submitted to Moodle before the deadline. • Students work in groups to design the infographic. • Students upload the infographics into Moodle and Instagram.
	2.Entrepreneurship fair	• Lecturers explain students what the fair is, objectives, organization, learning outputs and students' roles. • Lecturers print the infographics in a poster size and bring them with another material to the fair. The fair is organized in an open space, in this case, the entrance of the faculty, where not only students but also other people can visit the groups stands. • Students arrive at the agreed time. Lecturers explain again the activity. Students take the materials and expend the first 15 minutes organizing their stands. • Then the fair starts. Student interact in an informal way, some of them stay in the stand to explain their business, others go to visit the other groups stands. • After the fair, student's carry out an online survey about the infographics, business plans and presentations of the other groups. International lecturers complete the survey based on the analysis of the infographics. • Lecturers generate a feedback report for each group based on lecturers and students' contributions to the online survey.

Source: Authors' elaboration

Table 4. International actions design and organization (II)

Action	Activity	Organization
International pitching day	3. Elevator pitch (All the groups)	• Lecturers explain students what an elevator pitch is, objectives, organization, learning outputs and students' roles. In a previous class and in a document in Moodle. • Lecturers explain that all the groups are going to participate in the first round. However, in the second round, only a few groups selected by lecturers from the first round will perform the presentation. • Students arrive at the agreed time, and perform the elevator pitch. • Lecturers select the best presentations and communicate the results to students in Moodle.
	4. Elevator pitch (International lecturers)	• Students arrive at class. Lecturers connect with international invited lecturers and the activity starts. • Best presentations from the previous activity perform their improved elevator pitch. • International lecturers provide feedback after each presentation. • The activity concludes with the awards ceremony. Best presentations are selected after national and international lecturers' deliberations. The best infographic is selected according with the results of the online survey performed after activity two.

Source: Authors' elaboration

Project methodology

The methodology for the design and implementation of these internationalization actions follows the project methodology in which, firstly, they are planned, designed and organized in four activities, secondly, they are communicated to international students and lecturers, thirdly, the actions take place, and fourthly, students are evaluated, and lecturers analyze the learning methods and outputs.

Tables 3 and 4 describe the activities and organization of the two actions.

In the case of the first action, the face-to-face hours dedicated to its development were four hours in each course: two hours to teach how to communicate projects and two hours for the Entrepreneurship Fair. In the case of the second of the action, again four hours were allocated in each course, two hours to carry out the pitches in the first phase (all groups) and two hours to carry out the pitches in the second international phase.

Once the actions were planned and designed, the lecturers of the course prepared materials to communicate the project to students and international lecturers. On the one hand, the dates on which each of the four actions would take place were introduced in the planning of the course available in the virtual classroom. On the other hand, a document with instructions was prepared. It explains for each action, when it takes place, what students have to do, and the instructions to do it, as well as the prizes that will be awarded throughout the activities (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Information document on internationalization actions



The evaluation of these events is included in the 35% represented by the business plan. Within this 35%, the report accounts 70%, and the presentation 30%, half from individual performance and half from group performance during the presentation. We do not evaluate each of the four activities. The only one that is included in the evaluation as the presentation is the elevator pitch that all the students do, and that replaces the traditional presentation of the business plan in front of the lecturers. Subsequently, the best infographics and the best elevator pitches can get extra points related to the presentation of the business project.

RESULTS

During the 2021-2022 academic year, 51 students enrolled in the business creation and family business course in English and 47 in the course in Spanish. The number of students involved in the project were 45 and 37 in the English and Spanish courses, respectively.

First internationalization action "How to communicate your project"

Following the instructions provided to the students, each group generated and sent through the virtual classroom the infographic of their project (Figure 2). Once the students sent the infographics, they were printed in large format so that they could rely on them when presenting the commercial part of their business projects to their classmates. Although at first the social network Twitter was going to be used to spread the infographics and photographs (we had already created a profile for a previous teaching innovation project), after informal consultations with the students, we decided to create an Instagram profile (@creationofcompanies_uc).

Figure 2. Examples of infographics created by students to present their business plans



The second activity of the first internationalization action took place on May 3, 2022, which we call "Entrepreneurship Fair". The day of the Entrepreneurship was a success. Students were given some time to prepare their business stand (for this we brought different types of materials) and then they organized themselves to explain their projects to other students, while they rotated from stand to stand. Once the morning (English) and afternoon (Spanish) group sessions were completed, the photos were published on the Instagram profile for them to interact with each other. Each publication incorporated a small text to attract the attention to the project.

Through these first two activities, students worked and improved their ability to communicate their business ideas both in writing and visually (through infographics), as well as orally in an informal context such as the fair. During the fair, students not only presented a speech prepared in advance, but they also answered questions from the attendees and even defended their proposal in the face of questions, doubts and limitations raised by those attending the fair (classmates and lecturers). During the fair, it has been possible to observe students practising communication skills such as active listening or assertiveness, and how this facilitated communication and the transmission of their message. In the same way, it has been observed how some students have needed to modify and adapt their speech according to the previous knowledge that their interlocutors had about the product or service in question. When designing their infographics and designing their stand, students have shown their creativity and the use of different techniques and technologies, in some cases even designing web pages or mobile apps with which to display their business and products/ services to those attending the fair.

In relation to other competences and professional skills, students had to solve as a group the problem of autonomously communicating their business idea in different formats. The results of the infographics and the exhibitions at the fair demonstrated a high degree of success in the development of these skills, given that all the groups were able to communicate their business in different formats, to different people, both in English as well as in Spanish. In the same way, a high degree of participation was observed when it came to expressing opinions and criticisms of their colleagues' projects, as well as a great interest in the ideas and criticisms received by their project during the presentations at the fair.

In order to improve the assessment and the feedback about all the infographics, as well as the work of the groups during the fair, we used the TYPERFORM platform to carry out a survey (Figure 3). The objective was that, in a simple and fast way, both students and lecturers (national and international) could assess the projects. In this survey, respondents had to rate their general impression, what they enjoyed most and what it should be improved, the general quality, the level of innovation, and the price-quality relationship (value for money). In addition, they were asked about the willingness to buy the product/service and the likelihood to recommend it to someone they know. Finally, the survey requested to provide open comments about the infographic and the presentation, in order to allow students and lecturers to include feedback about aspects non-included previously in the survey or specific and detailed questions that they consider relevant and useful for the improvement of the business plan and their communication.

Figure 3. Survey in Typeform platform



Figure 4 provides an example of the individual assessment prepared for each group based on the survey results for the default questions. In addition, the assessments were completed with the list of comments made by students and lecturers about the business plan and its communication. The first part of the report provides an average and general assessment of the business plan and its presentation. The second part provides information on specific and concrete aspects highlighted by students and lecturers. This feedback was elaborated by Spanish's lecturers for each group after the fair. Through these reports, students received feedback not only on their business plan, but also on how they had communicated it during the first two actions. The participation of the rest of the classmates in the evaluation of a project supposes a significant improvement of the feedback system, since it increases the number and variety of opinions and critics. At the same time, it enables and encourages the critical spirit of students.

Figure 4. Sample of the group feedback given to the students

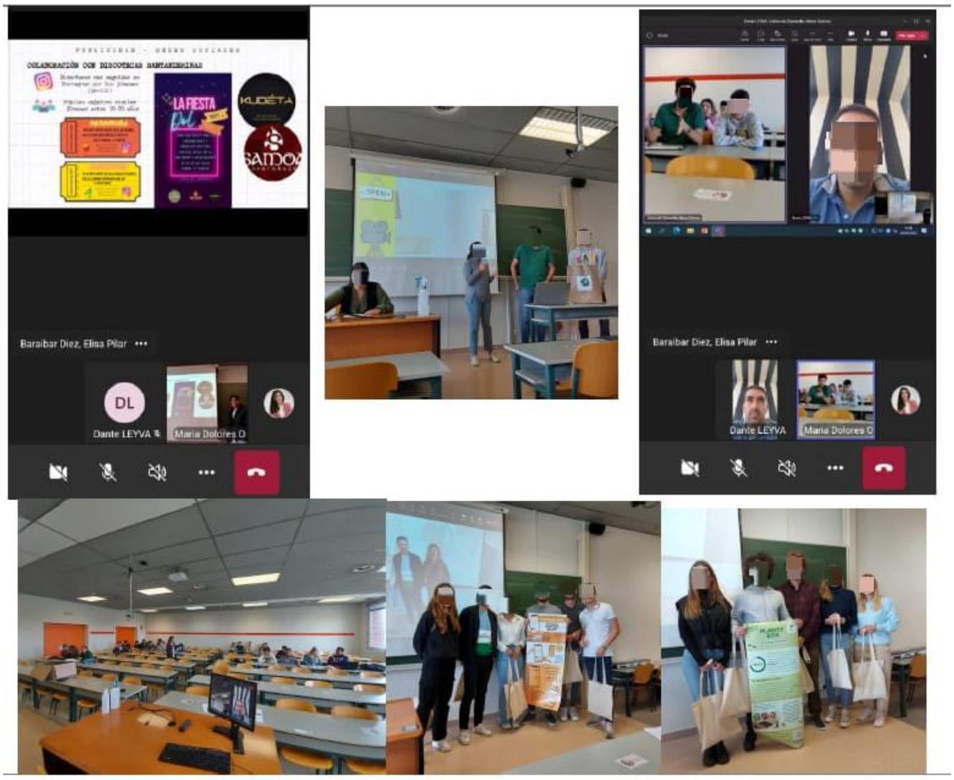


Second internationalization action "International Pitching Day"

This internationalization action is closely related to the How to Communicate your Project internationalization action, so that resources are shared and synergies are generated. The students were provided with the calendar for carrying out the presentation of the projects (pitches) in two phases: May 23 and May 24 2022, as well as the instructions for carrying out the internationalization actions, with their stages and prizes (Figure 1). At the beginning of the second action, after having presented the infographics in the first action, students already had feedback from their classmates and their lecturers that allowed them to make the pertinent modifications and improve their communication strategies.

In the first round of presentations (activity 3), all the groups presented their business project. An elevator pitch usually lasts a few minutes and, on this occasion, a maximum time of 6 minutes was established, at the rate of one minute for each member of the group. The Spanish lecturers of the course chose the finalists so that they could go on to the next round (activity 4) and make the presentation again, but this time in front of a panel of international lecturers (Figure 5). Unlike the Spanish's lecturers of the course and the other students, these lecturers from other universities only had previous contact with the business plans through the infographics. This situation contributed in the last activity to staging a situation more similar to reality, in which some entrepreneurs must present their business idea to a potential investor who is listening to them for the first time. Finally, we proceeded to the awards ceremony.

Figure 5. International Pitching Day Images



In these two activities, students continued to work on their oral communication skills, in this case applying a communication technique different from those used during the fair, such as the elevator pitch. By asking the students to present through an elevator speech, we presented them with a new problem that they had to solve as a team, deciding how to effectively convey their business idea in such a limited time. All the groups demonstrated the acquisition of these skills in the first of the activities of this action, by being able to condense all their work from the previous weeks in a presentation of just six minutes, and being able to effectively transmit their idea. The intervention of international lecturers in the second activity provided both the groups selected for that second presentation and the rest of the students with an international and multicultural perspective of their business ideas.

Although during the design phase we discussed the possibility of carrying out a survey after the presentations of the second action, we considered that it was an additional workload for the students that could also be repetitive (also for international lecturers). So, the feedback in this second action was given orally. The comments provided by international lecturers were very accurate and enriching, reaffirming recommendations and suggestions previously discussed in other stages of the process, and contributing with new limitations and ideas.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The teaching of entrepreneurship is an area with great potential in business education (Almeida, 2021), in which autonomous learning, cooperative learning

and learning by doing are the main tools to foster communication skills, imagination, creativity and innovation (Almeida, 2021).

Encouraging student participation in their training and learning is essential according to the European Higher Education Area. The present research shows how as part of a business plan project, communication activities in which students collaborate informally with other students (peer collaboration) and with other lecturers (getting feedback on their work) are more effective than using traditional learning methodologies in which they get final feedback in an evaluation test.

The main difference is that active learning methodologies provide the feedback while the business plan is being developed, and not when the plan is finished. Thus, with the perception and feedback provided by the peers and lecturers, students can increase their knowledge and competences, and improve their business projects during the semester. In part, this feedback helps to have a broader view of the needs of the target audience or to improve the marketing channels for the product or service, as well as its characteristics.

The communication activities performed have helped students to develop transversal competences such as synthesis capacity, oral and written communication, discussion and debate skills, assertiveness, active listening and empathy. Furthermore, the freedom given to students when designing how to communicate their business plans, as well as the tools and methodologies used in the design, have generated a much more creative environment with a greater variety of resources. In addition, the results have shown a greater involvement of the students, not only in the task of communicating their business project, but also in the interest, attention and feedback provided to the business plans of their peers, thus increasing learning through this cooperation.

Including the element of social media, through Instagram, also generates engagement, allowing them to show their work not only to their peers in the classroom but also to their peers outside the classroom or their home universities, giving visibility to their efforts and showing less traditional dynamics. Although the activities have been developed in a cooperative learning context, the introduction of awards has facilitated the advantages that team working activities have within a competitive environment to simulate the real enterprise world and to develop entrepreneurial skills, what is commonly accepted as a didactic option in entrepreneurial education (Erdmann et al, 2022). The international and multicultural dimension of the activities, together with the greater interaction between people, increases the diversity of knowledge, experiences and opinions, far beyond the simple supervision of a single lecturer.

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